

Mayor's Ad-Hoc Parking Study Committee
Monday, November 2, 2009
4:30 PM
Council Chambers

In attendance: Councilor Keith Nyhan, Councilor Allen Bennett, Councilor Rob Werner, Will Delker, John Hoyt, Charlie Russell

Staff: Carlos Baía, David Florence, Brad Osgood, Matt Walsh

Absent: Jeff Bart, Jim Corrigan

Meeting convened at 4:35 pm.

Approval of the October 19, 2009 minutes

The minutes were approved unanimously.

Presentation on the Durgin and Firehouse Garages' Proformas

[The Powerpoint presentation entitled "Durgin & Firehouse Proformas: Mayor's Ad-Hoc Parking Study Committee, November 2, 2009" is submitted as part of the official record. The presentation was made by Carlos Baía. The minutes will not reflect the details of the presentation with the exception of areas where comments or questions were raised by the committee members.]

Will Delker inquired if metered spaces generated more revenue than leased spaces.

Dave Florence responded that relative to an uncovered space, a metered space at full use would foster about the same as a lease. A covered lease space, however, would produce about \$300 more in revenue.

Mr. Delker surmised that a leased space is a source of more stable revenue as well.

In the discussion of the complications for the possible sale of the Durgin Garage, Mr. Baía noted that the long-term leases and land requirement for spaces at the end of the lease term would be a significant factor to consider by any potential buyer of the garage.

Charlie Russell commented that such long-term leases could be bought out similar to what is done with life estates.

Mr. Baía noted that the Firehouse Garage is also encumbered by 41 spaces that are provided to the City for city vehicles and employee parking at no cost to the General Fund.

Chair Nyhan asked if these spaces were reserved. Mr. Florence explained the history and current practice with regard to the allocation of the City's spaces. He posited that there doesn't seem to be one coherent model as to which employees are assigned spaces.

Mr. Baía explained that the storage of city vehicles at the Firehouse facility was, in part, a result of trying to accommodate the public at meter spaces behind City Hall particularly during the winter months in which the Engineering vehicles aren't as used.

Mr. Russell inquired as to the formula that the City's General Services Department (GSD) uses to allocate costs. Mr. Baía responded that this is not clear and that if the Committee would like, he could have a representative from GSD appear before the Committee at a future date to provide an explanation.

Mr. Baía elaborated that the GSD costs are in excess of \$60,000 to the Parking Fund. Mr. Florence presented an idea of taking one of his Parking Enforcement Officers (PEO) and converting him/her to a maintenance technician for the garages. This would be a promotion for the PEO but would likely only cost the Parking Fund about \$6,000 in additional compensation. This individual could then be directly controlled by the Parking division. Mr. Florence did qualify this, however, by indicating that certain maintenance items might still need to be contracted out to GSD or elsewhere but that overall he felt it might be more efficient and cost-effective.

Chair Nyhan asked the Committee whether anyone had any interest in having GSD appear before them to explain their cost allocation formula. No one responded.

Mr. Russell mentioned that he had spoken with the Police Chief and that the Chief appeared to support selling the garages. He asked if the Police Department would like to divest itself of the parking operation.

Mr. Baía responded that the Chief was probably reacting to a level of frustration that was felt by Mr. Baía and the other members of the City staff at the table: the awareness that the Parking Fund could be more efficient and cost effective if re-structured. Mr. Baía added that there are some advantages to looking at parking from outside a Police perspective such as using parking as an economic development tool. He cited the notion of changing the ratio of metered to lease spaces in Durgin, for example, as an incentive that could be used to attract investment downtown. However, he cautioned that this would also have broader public policy implications.

Mr. Baía stated that there is a challenge from moving parking from PD physically. Currently, parking relies on police-specific software/databases for much of their work.

Mr. Florence noted that NH is one of only possibly 3 states that does not sell its driver information to private vendors. As such, the reliance of the parking division on PD's programs is critical. He added that this is a large reason why private companies haven't made inroads in NH in terms of taking over parking enforcement.

Mr. Russell remarked that prior to the tightening of the privacy laws due to stalking crimes, an attorney could go to the records office with a license plate number and find the information on the drivers.

Chair Nyhan summarized that a review of the parking operation's organizational structure and staffing is an issue that he'd like to add to the list of action items for the committee to follow-up on.

Chair Nyhan inquired as to how the parking fund fits into the budget discussion. Brad Osgood replied that he and Mr. Florence develop the parking proforma and he is also responsible for the PD's budget. Chair Nyhan asked if the parking operations were taken from PD wouldn't that free up his time to work on other police-related matters.

Councilor Bennett asked if PD could do without the Parking Fund's subsidy of a full-time police officer. Mr. Osgood replied that it would be an impact to the General Fund. He noted, however, that the Parking Fund does not pay for water, sewer, electricity, rent, etc. stemming from the Parking Division's use of Police Headquarters.

Councilor Bennett expressed doubt that the parking division could no longer access the needed info if not part of PD. Mr. Delker noted that there is validity to the restriction that Mr. Florence outlined as he's seen it in terms of his profession.

Mr. Florence gave examples of Manchester and Portsmouth as communities that have split parking enforcement from PD. However, in both cases, there has been a remaining link to PD either through a "violations bureau" or a "liaison".

Mr. Delker interjected that the solution to him shouldn't be about shifting funds as this only serves to move the financial impact from one side to another. Mr. Baía noted that funds such as the parking fund were theoretically supposed to be self-sufficient.

Mr. Walsh suggested that the Committee examine an informal audit of the Parking Fund vis-à-vis the General Fund so as to sift out all the costs and determine what the bottom line is. Chair Nyhan agreed and asked to have that information.

Mr. Russell remarked that in 1948 when the parking fund was created it was meant to create a means to ultimately build garages. Now that the garages are constructed, he wondered why there is still a need for the fund. Chair Nyhan noted that it is like the argument about keeping toll booths once a road has been paid for.

Mr. Russell felt that the objective is to find better ways to address the parking fund deficiencies.

Mr. Nyhan stated that enterprise funds should function as such.

Mr. Delker asked what would happen if the fund was flush with cash. Chair Nyhan answered that it would act as a reserve, akin to the undesignated fund balance for the General Fund.

John Hoyt asked if the Airport Advisory Committee has reviewed the GSD outflows as part of their purview. Mr. Baía noted that this fund is positive primarily due to the National Guard Lease, were it not for this, a similar examination would need to have taken place.

Mr. Baía's presentation and resulting discussion concluded at 5:25 pm.

On-Street Parking Zones

Mr. Florence had provided each of the Committee members with a colored map outlining the city's parking zones.

Mr. Florence noted that the zones are not necessarily fixed permanently. For example, Main Street used to be one hour and upon a request from Main Street Concord, Inc. and Council approval, was changed to two hours.

Councilor Bennett noted that a significant problem for the City's parking operations is the State of New Hampshire. Mr. Florence noted that there are 50 bagged meters during the legislative session.

Mr. Delker inquired as to whether the State pays the City for this. Mr. Baía answered that it did not. There is a non-related payment that the State has made but it does not correlate to the level of services provided by the City.

Chair Nyhan asked as to the cost to install a meter. Mr. Florence indicated that a double-head meter installed is about \$1,000 while a parking machine akin to those used in downtown Manchester is \$12,000 for about 10 spaces.

Chair Nyhan asked the committee what they felt their goal was. Was it to make people pay as much as possible or to serve businesses.

Mr. Delker asked why one business should benefit from free parking while another had meters.

Chair Nyhan wondered if it made sense to have eight parking zones as is current practice.

Mr. Russell cited a *Boston Globe* article from today that described how Chicago's sale of its parking enforcement operations to a private concern had generated tremendous revenue through enforcement but had been accompanied by commensurate plummeting of the Mayor's popularity.

Discussion then shifted to Storrs Street. Mr. Walsh opined that the free parking at the south end of Storrs Street should be eliminated. Councilor Werner asked about the Capital Shopping Center lot. Mr. Baía responded that if 60 cars began to regularly park in that private lot, the management might be more likely to notice and enforce their own regulations.

Mr. Walsh observed that any recommendation or implemented change in terms of the parking zones would need to be closely monitored to determine where the impacts would be on the adjacent neighborhoods.

Chair Nyhan asked what an ideal parking enforcement map would look like. Councilor Bennett answered that all the areas noted on the map would be metered. Councilor Werner elaborated that parking is a resource; therefore, it shouldn't be free.

Mr. Walsh suggested a resident permit program whereby meters could be installed in certain neighborhood streets but local residents could purchase a permit to allow them to park without penalty. Mr. Delker expressed that such a permit should be free for residents.

Mr. Delker asked when a double-headed meter would see a return from revenue. Mr. Walsh indicated that this could happen, potentially by the end of the 1st year.

Mr. Florence explained that Portsmouth is examining a program whereby machines are installed at no cost to the City. Mr. Florence observed that if Concord were to pursue such a structure, the existing meters could be relocated into the neighborhoods that currently only have time zones.

Councilor Werner felt that the way to determine which areas received meters would be by analyzing the balance on a street between business and residential demands. If there is an imbalance, it could justify meters.

Chair Nyhan asked Mr. Baía what his thoughts were on the idea of acquiring machines and relocating meters. While Mr. Baía liked the idea of moving meters to such areas as south Storrs Street, he cautioned the committee that such a project has many details. He reminded the committee that the original task was to determine ways to keep the parking fund financially viable.

Mr. Baía asked Mr. Florence if he had staff today that could properly enforce such a broad metered area as envisioned by the committee. Mr. Florence answered that if he were to be able to change one of his PEOs to maintenance, he would not have adequate staffing; otherwise he might be ok. A concern, however, that he would have would be how to provide staff support to screen and issue resident permits.

Mr. Russell mentioned that he had drafted a paper some years ago on parking and would send it to Mr. Baía for distribution to the committee.

Review of Mr. Delker's Email Questions

Mr. Delker re-visited the points raised in his email and specifically asked about efforts to market the Capital Commons Garage. Mr. Walsh indicated that he and Mr. Florence had worked on this issue and had information that they could share with the committee at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Hoyt proposed closing the upper floors of Capital Commons to give the impression of higher use and thus draw more parkers.

Chair Nyhan asked to have a report of the Capital Commons problems to date such as caulking that fell on vehicles, etc.

Tasks for Next Meeting

Chair Nyhan summarized the tasks for the next meeting as follows:

1. "Audit" of Parking Fund vis-à-vis General Fund
2. History of Capital Commons problems and current status
3. Review of City efforts to market Capital Commons Garage

As an on-going project for future discussion, Chair Nyhan asked for a study of a differentiated meter rate structure.

Mr. Florence asked the committee to review the draft parking brochure he provided and bring feedback to the next meeting.

Mr. Baía reminded the committee that the next meeting was Monday, November 16th at 4:30 in the Council Chambers.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm.